

# UN HABITAT



STATE OF THE WORLD'S CITIES 2010/2011

BRIDGING THE URBAN DIVIDE

## FOREWORD

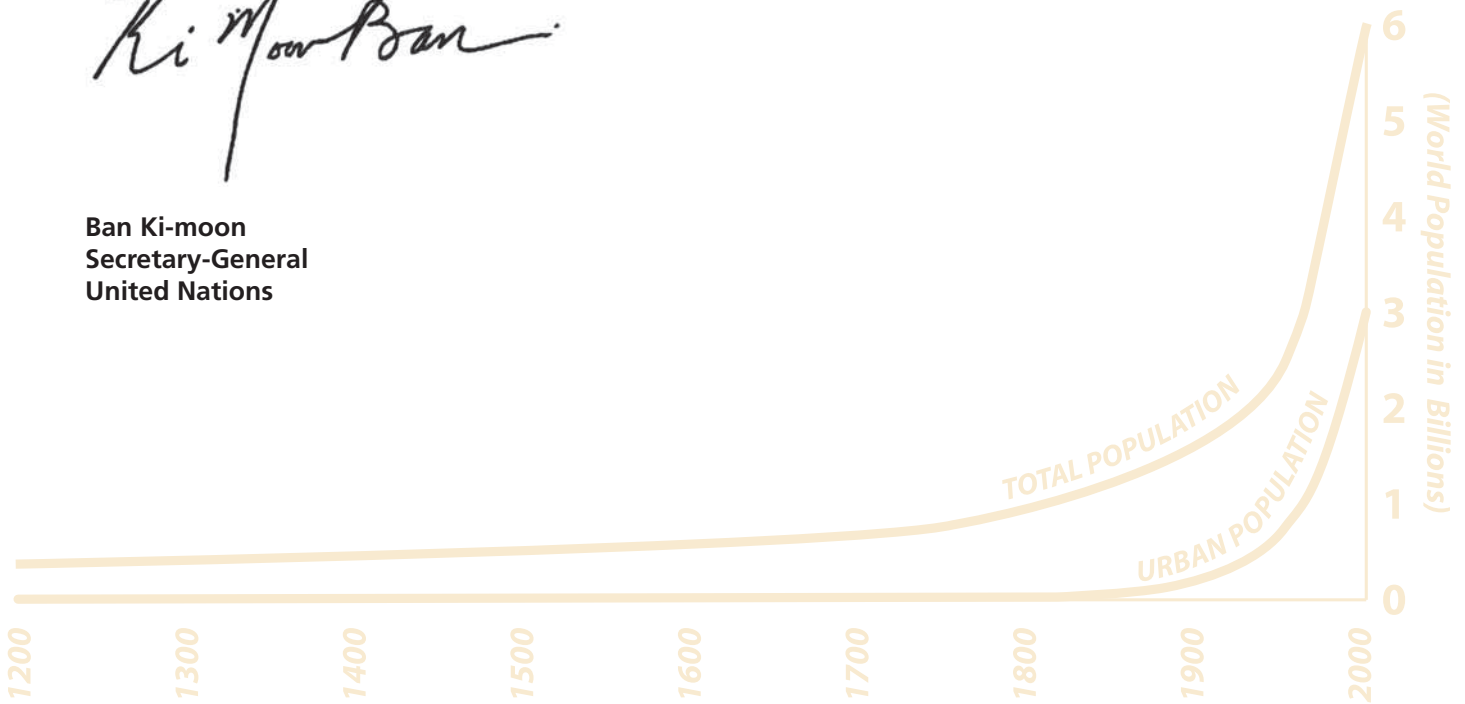


The emerging picture of the 21st century city fits many descriptions. Some are centres of rapid industrial growth and wealth creation, often accompanied by harmful waste and pollution. Others are characterized by stagnation, urban decay and rising social exclusion and intolerance. Both scenarios point to the urgent need for new, more sustainable approaches to urban development. Both argue for greener, more resilient and inclusive towns and cities that can help combat climate change and resolve age-old urban inequalities.

The ***State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide*** examines the social, economic, cultural and political drivers of urban poverty and deprivation. It argues that much inequality and injustice stems from inadequate policy-making and planning by local authorities and central governments alike. Typical remedies include removing barriers that prevent access to land, housing, infrastructure and basic services, and facilitating rather than inhibiting participation and citizenship. The report also emphasizes that lasting gains are best achieved through a combination

of local action and national enabling policies. As we grapple with old and new challenges in a rapidly urbanizing world, this timely report can help inform research, policy dialogue and development planning for years to come. I commend its findings to all who are working to create the just, green and dynamic environments that the inhabitants of the world's towns and cities need to thrive.

**Ban Ki-moon**  
Secretary-General  
United Nations



## INTRODUCTION



The *State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide* is published in a very important year – a key milestone that marks the halfway point towards the deadline for the “slum target” of the Millennium Development Goals. Government efforts to reduce the number of slum dwellers show some positive results.

According to new estimates presented in this report, between the year 2000 and 2010 over 200 million people in the developing world will have been lifted out of slum conditions. In other words, governments have collectively exceeded the Millennium Target by at least a multiple of two.

However, this achievement is not uniformly distributed across regions. Success is highly skewed towards the more advanced emerging economies, while poorer countries have not done as well. For this reason, there is no room for complacency, because in the course of the same years the number of slum dwellers increased by six million every year. Based on these trends it is expected that the world's slum population will continue to grow if no corrective action is taken in the coming years.

This report highlights the unprecedented challenges which urbanization throws at the world's cities today – particularly in the South – and the attendant **urban divide** which we all have to address collectively to stem the multiple deprivations that follow from unequal growth. These challenges include grinding poverty, environmental degradation, income inequalities, historical socio-economic inequalities, marginalization and various forms of exclusion.

Achieving sustainable urban development is likely to prove impossible if the **urban divide** is allowed not only to persist, but to continue growing, opening up an enormous gap, even in some cities a gulf, an open wound, which can produce social instability or at least generate high social and economic costs not only for the urban poor, but for society at large.

This edition of the report underlines the choices available to policy-makers across the range of economic, social, cultural and political challenges that are needed to bridge the **urban divide**. It charts a new course of action, with the steps and levers needed to achieve a more inclusive city, emphasizing the need for comprehensive and integrated responses that go beyond a compartmentalized, short-term perspective.

The report benefits enormously from context-specific knowledge drawing in large part on regional perspectives and information, in a bid to inspire evidence-based local policy responses. In that sense, this report contributes to bridge the gap between scientific information and societal action, which is a simple, but fundamental requisite, to promote equity and sustainability for more harmonious cities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Anna K. Tibaijuka'.

**Anna K. Tibaijuka**  
**Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director**  
**United Nations Human Settlements Programme**  
**(UN-HABITAT)**